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MetroParks

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Hemlock Gorge Reservation

Needham, Newton, Wellesley

894/476



History

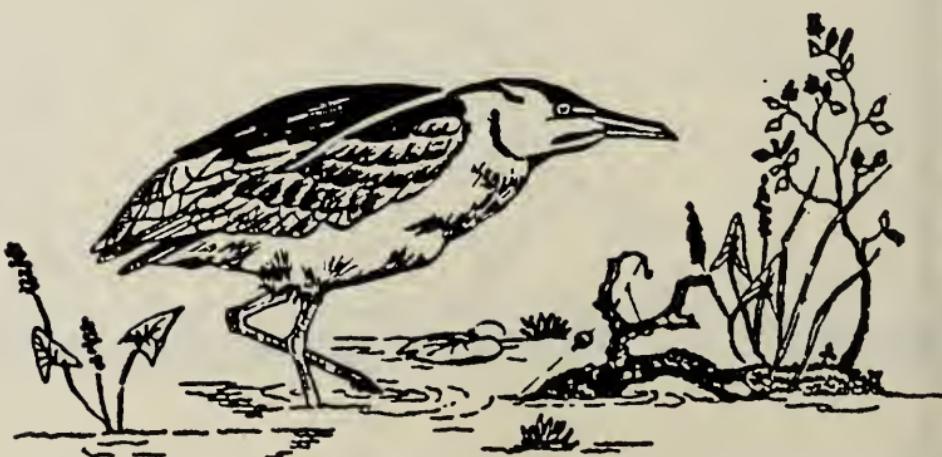
“Passing now up the Charles River valley toward the southern highlands, it is well to stop for a moment at the wonderful little gorge of Newton Upper Falls, where the river cuts its way through ledges clothed with hemlocks.”

Charles Eliot, 1893

Eliot was not the first to be drawn to this spot. Long ago, Native Americans came here to fish for alewife and shad. Colonists in the late 1600’s harnessed the river to power their mills. Newton Upper Falls grew into a large producer of both textile goods and machinery.

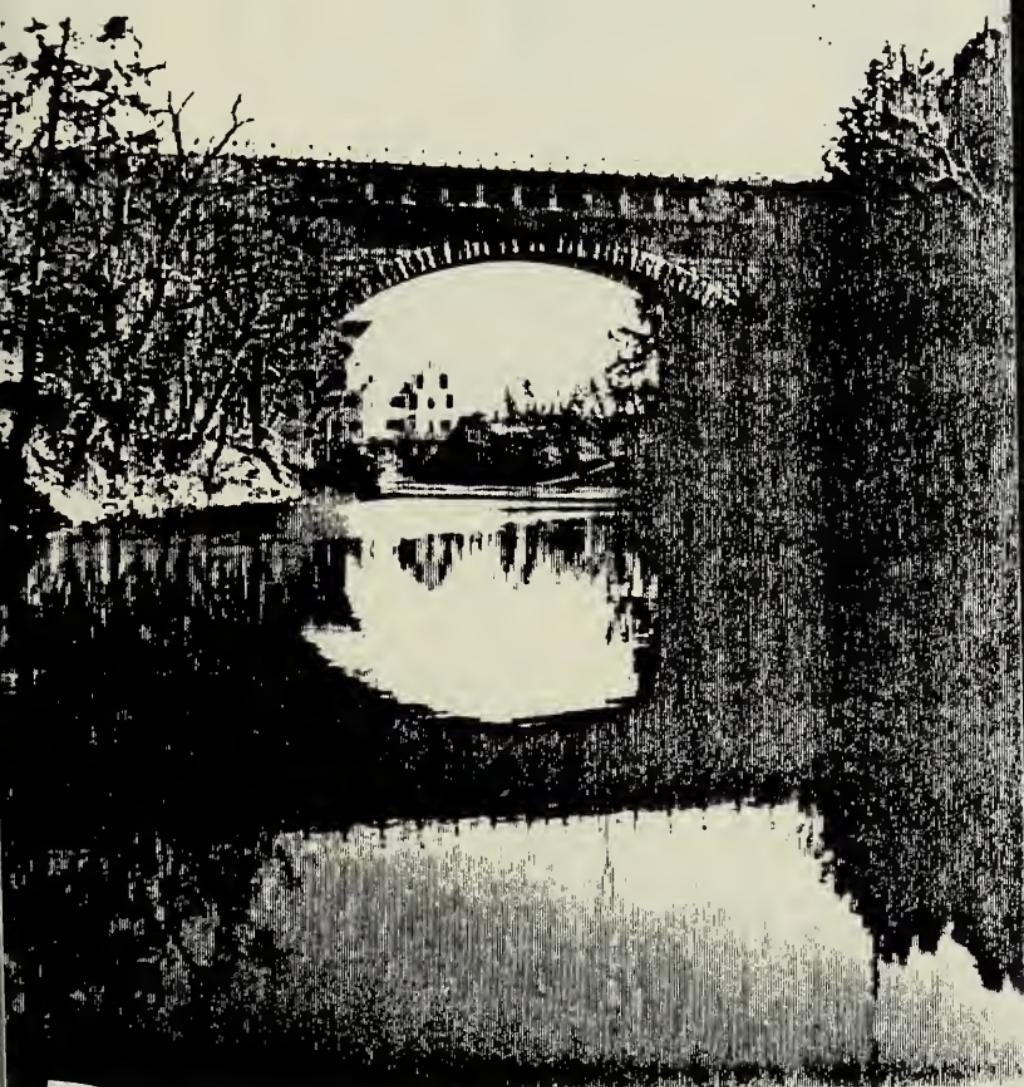
“The narrow stream flows swift and dark between quaintly broken rocks, and the great stone arch which bears the Sudbury River aqueduct leaps boldly across from bank to bank,” wrote Eliot of Echo Bridge. When constructed in 1876 and 1877, the bridge was the second largest of its kind in the nation with its central arch spanning almost 130 feet across and arching to nearly 60 feet above the river. Echo Bridge obtained its name from the unique acoustic qualities of this main arch, which can produce upwards of fifteen echos from a good stout yell.

In 1893, when Charles Eliot first proposed the inclusion of Hemlock Gorge into the newly established Metropolitan Park System, it was already a popular place, sometimes attracting 5000 people on a warm weekend day. Shortly thereafter, his vision was realized when Hemlock Gorge Reservation was preserved as a reservation for all generations to enjoy.



Directions

Hemlock Gorge Reservation is located on the Charles River between Newton Upper Falls and Needham. To get there, take Route 128 (I-95) to Route 9 East and get off at first exit (Newton Upper Falls). Turn right at stop sign onto Ellis Street and right again at next stop sign onto Chestnut Street. Turn right at first traffic light onto Elliot Street (Central Ave. in Needham). Parking is off of Hamilton Place (first right after crossing river).



Guided walks are available so that you may learn more about the unique cultural and natural histories of the park. Please follow all park regulations; take only memories, and leave only footprints.

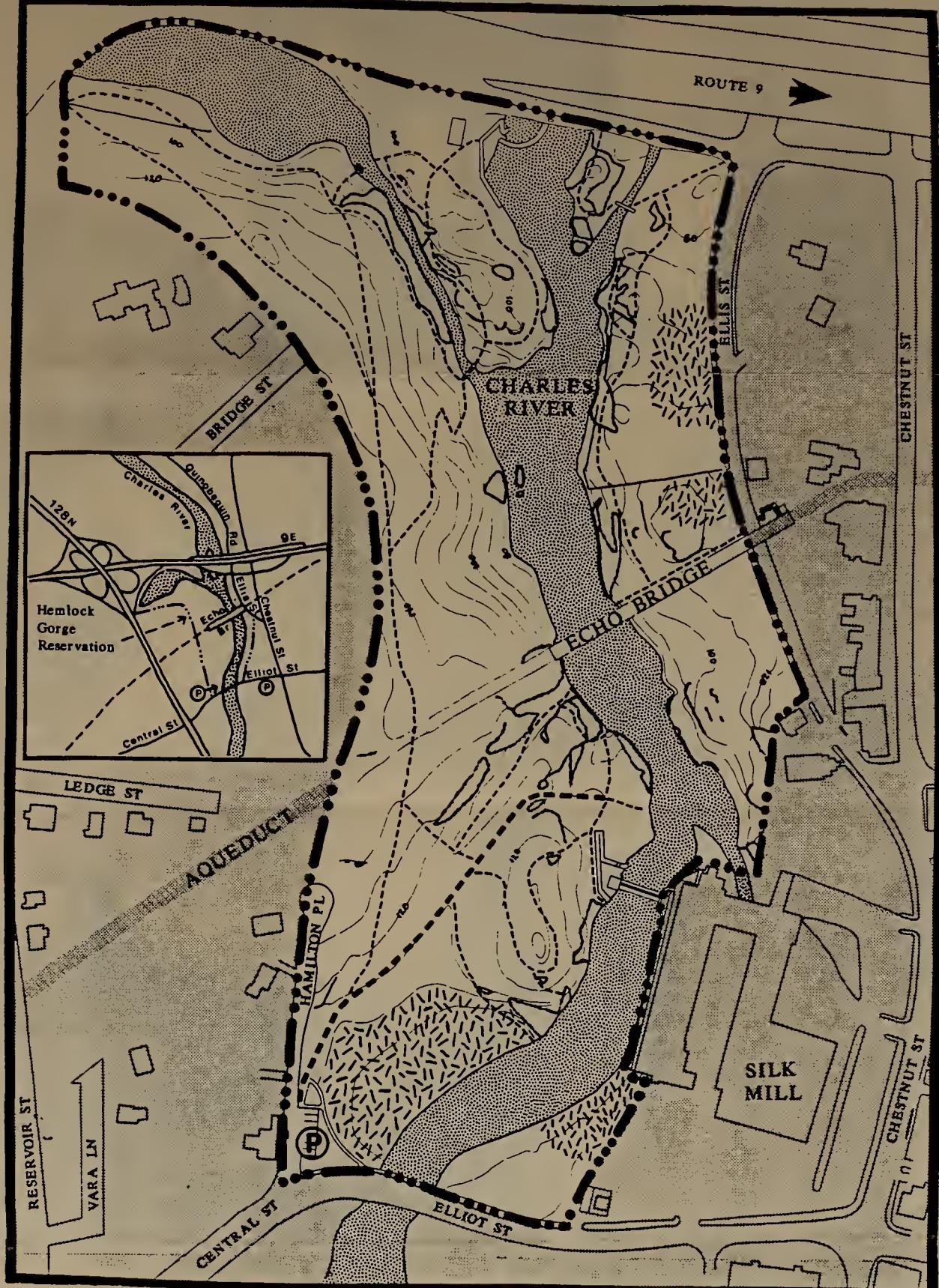
For more information, contact us at:

Metropolitan District Commission
Elm Bank and Hemlock Gorge
Reservations
900 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA 02181
(617) 239-0659



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HEMLOCK GORGE RESERVATION



Regulations

For the protection and enjoyment of Hemlock Gorge Reservation, the following are prohibited:

- Motorized vehicles
- Alcoholic beverages
- Pets, except on a leash
- Firearms, fires or camping
- Climbing or rappelling on Echo Bridge
- Amplified sound
- Firewood cutting or collecting of any kind
- Littering: Please carry out all trash or dispose of in trash barrels

Legend

- BOUNDARY LINE
- - - FIRE ACCESS ROAD
- - - FOOT TRAIL
- (P) PARKING
- STONE WALL
- OPEN FIELD
- 10FT CONTOUR
- ROCK OUTCROPPING

N

Scale in feet

0 80 160 240

A Commitment to Open Space and the Environment

In 1892, Charles Eliot proposed the creation of a Metropolitan Parks System. Eliot was a member of the Frederick Law Olmsted Landscape Architectural Firm, and the first landscape architect to work on development of the parks system. Eliot believed that particularly in a crowded urban area, people needed easy access to and contact with nature and open space in order to relax, unwind and escape the pressure of city life. To that end, Eliot developed a plan that would provide the growing city and its suburbs with scenery, parks and reservations to be held in perpetuity for the public's use and enjoyment.

Eliot's idea was to set aside beachfront along the bay, land along the Charles, Mystic and Neponset Rivers and high ground throughout the Metropolitan area, and to turn this property into regional parks. He envisioned the creation of a series of parkways and roads built and maintained with aesthetics in mind, to make travel between the parks easy and attractive. By 1893 Eliot's design had begun to take shape as the state created the Metropolitan Parks Commission and placed with it 9,177 acres of reservations, 13 miles of ocean frontage, 56 miles of riverbank and seven parkways. Since then, the system has grown. The Commission acquired and preserved thousands of additional acres of parkland that fit into Olmsted and Eliot's original design. It also built new parks, skating rinks, swimming pools, athletic fields, band shells and other recreational outlets. Even today, more property is being preserved; more historical sites are being restored; more ways to make the regional parks system safe and accessible and attractive are being devised.

Nearly a century after Olmsted and Eliot's pioneering began, their vision remains strong; our metropolitan parks system remains vibrant.

We can only maintain this great park system with public support and cooperation. Please do your part by respecting each property and complying with all rules and regulations. Thank you.

**Metropolitan District Commission
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